

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 03336 240959Z

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ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

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LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PFOR MOPS MILI EAID MASS PINT OREP CB US

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH MARSHAL LON NOL

1. ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23, I CALLED ON THE MARSHAL. I
RAISED WITH HIM THE FOLLOWING SIX SUBJECTS:

A. RECRUITING. I STRESSED DIRE NEED TO REPLACE COMBAT
LOSSES SUFFERED BY THE INTERVENTION BRIGADES RECENTLY AND
REVIEWED WITH HIM MEASURES GKR COULD TAKE TOWARD THAT END.
SOME OF THE COMBAT BRIGADES ARE PRESENTLY AT 30 PER CENT OF
AUTHORIZED STRENGTH. ADDITIONAL INTERVENTION UNITS ARE
NEEDED TO OPEN THE LOWER MEKONG. I THEREFORE AGAIN
EMPHASIZED THEME I HAVE STRESSED FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR I
HAVE BEEN HERE, I.E. NEED FOR MORE VIGOROUS RECRUITING
ESPECIALLY FOR THE INTERVENTION BRIGADES. I HOPE THAT
THE MARSHAL WILL ORDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOME OF
THE IDEAS WE DISCUSSED, SUCH AS PROCLAIMING AN AMNESTY
FOR DESERTERS FROM FANK IN ORDER TO BRING THEM BACK INTO
THE RANKS, EXTENDING THE UPPER LIMIT OF THE DRAFT AGE
BEYOND 35 SO THAT THESE OLDER SOLDIERS CAN TAKE ON
SOME OF THE STATIC DEFENSE FUNCTIONS PRESENTLY BEING
CARRIED OUT BY TROOPS THAT COULD BE USED FOR COMBAT,
DRAFTING CIVIL SERVANTS AND STUDENTS FOR CERTAIN
FUNCTIONS SUCH AS NIGHTPATROLLING IN PHNOM PENH, WHICH
WOULD FREE SOLDIERS DOING THIS TASK NOW FOR OTHER DUTIES.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PHNOM 03336 240959Z

B. SECURITY OF AIRPORT. I CALLED THE MARSHAL'S ATTENTION TO THE NUMBER OF ROCKETS WHICH CONTINUE TO HIT POCHENTONG AIPIORT DAILY. SOME OF THESE 107 ROCKETS EXPLODE VERY NEAR THE LARGE US AIRCRAFT PRESENTLY USED TO BEING SUPPLIES IN TO PHNOM PENH. IF A DC-8 SHOULD BE DESTROYED, \$12 MILLION WOULD GO UP IN SMOKE AND THAT WOULD NOT BE THE ONLY DIRE CONSEQUENCE. I THEREFORE STRESSED THE NEED TO GET MORE TROOPS ON THE GROUND TO PUSH THE ENEMY FURTHER AWAY FROM THE CITY SO THAT HE WILL BE OUT OF RANGE OF THE AIRPORT WITH HIS 107 ROCKETS. THE MARSHAL PROMOSSED TO GIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO THAT EFFECT.

C. AIRLIFT OF COMMODITIES FOR CIVILIAN SECTOR. I INFORMED THE MARSHAL THAT ON FEB 27 WE WOULD START AIRLIFTING INTO POCHENTONG RICE AND POL PRODUCTS FOR THE CIVILINA SECTOR. AT THE SAME TIME, AIRLIFT OF AMMUNITION WILL CONTINUE WITH C-130'S OUT OF UTAPAO. BOTH OF THESE AIRLIFTS I CITED AS EXAMPLES OF OUT DETERMINATION TO HELP THE KHMERS GAIN TIME TO GET THEIR FORCES READY FOR THE LOWER MEKONG BATTLE, BUT THAT KHMERS MUST USE THIS TIME TO DO EVERYTHING IN THEIR POWER TO REOPEN THE MEKONG TO NAVIGATION.

D. BICKERING BETWEEN KHMER MILITARY AND CIVILIANS. I TOLD THE MARSHAL THAT IT HAD COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT BOTH KHMER MILITARY AND CIVILIANS ARE POINTING FINGERS AT EACH OTHER FOR FAILURES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF RESPONSIBIITY. THE MILITARY ACCUSE THE CIVILIANS OF NOT PROVIDING ENOUGH MONEY TO FINANCE THW WAR, AND THE CIVILIANS ACCUSE THE MILITARY OF BAD LEADERSHIP AND WASTING THE FUNDS THEY RECEIVE. THE END RESULT IS LOW MORALE, UNWILLINGNESS OF CIVILIANS TO SERVE IN FANK, ETC. I SAID NOTHING IS GAINED BY THESE RECRIMINATIONS AND THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT THE MARSHAL MIGHT WISH TO BRING TOGETHER AT CHAMCAR MON PALACE THE TOP CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERS AND TELL THEM TO STOP SQUABBLING AND START WORKING TOGETHER ON SOLVING PROBLEMS. (WHEN I DISCUSSED THE SAME PROBLEM WITH AMBASSADOR UM SIM LATER IN THE AFTERNOON, HE SUGGESTED THAT I FOLLOW UP THE MARSHAL'S MEETING WITH ONE OF

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PHNOM 03336 240959Z

MY OWN, SINCE, HE SAID, THE KHMER MILITARY AND CIVILIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LISTEN TO ME THAN TO THE MARSHAL. AFTER THE CODEL HAS LEFT TOWN, I WILL PROBABLY HOLD SUCH A MEETING, I THE PAST THESE PEP TALKS HAVE HELPED, BUT CLEARLY MORALE IN ALL KHMER QUARTERS IS NOT AS GOOD NOW AS IT WAS SOME MONTHS AGO.)

E. CODEL VISIT. I BRIEFED THE MARSHAL ON THE NAMES OF

THE CONGRESSMEN WHO WILL PROBABLY VISIT PHNOM PENH TOWARDS THE END OF THIS WEEK. I ALSO MENTIONED THAT WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH UM SIM AND THE PRIME MINISTER TO MAKE THIS VISIT A SUCCESS. I TOLD HIM THAT WHEN HE RECEIVED THE CODEL, THE AMERICAN LEGISLATORS WOULD PROBABLY WISH TO HEAR FROM HIM DIRECTLY ABOUT THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL SITUATION. I ALSO SUGGESTED THAT HE PREPARE HIMSELF FOR A HUNDRED OF QUESTIONS WHICH THE CODEL MEMBERS WILL PROBABLY ASK HIM. ABOVE ALL, THE KHMERS MUST SHOW DETERMINATION TO FIGHT ON BECAUSE WITHOUT THAT WILL, NO AMOUNT OF US MONEY CAN HELP.

F. DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS. THIS SUBJECT IS DISCUSSED IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE.

2. COMMENT. THE MARSHAL WAS SUBDUED. HE ALSO REFERRED TO "THE DIFFERENT ATMOSPHERE " PREVAILING THIS YEAR AMONG THE KHMERS COMPARED TO PREVIOUS DRY SEASONS. I THINK HE WAS REFERRING BOTH TO THE WAR WEARINESS OF THE KHMER PEOPLE AND TO HIS OWN WANING INFLUENCE WITH KHMER POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS. HE SAID HE HIMSELF REMAINS DETERMINED TO STRUGGLE ON, BUT HE WONDERS WHETHER THIS ATTITUDE IS SHARED BY THE MAJORITY OF HIS COUNTRYMEN. EVEN IF NO SUPPLEMENTAL AID IS VOTED BY THE US CONGRESS FOR CAMBODIA, THE MARSHAL OPINED THAT SOME KHMERS WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT ON AND WILL NOT WILLINGLY SUBMIT TO COMMUNIST RULE. IN ORDER TO BOOST HIS MORALE, I SAID THAT IN MY OPINION THE AMERICAN CONGRESS WOULD NOT TURN A DEAF EAR TO THE ADMINISTRATION'S REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR CAMBODIA AND THAT THEREFORE HE SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED. THE RECENT SET-BACKS IN BATTAMBANG PROVINCE AND ON

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 PHNOM 03336 240959Z

THE LOWER MEKONG, THE OUTLOOK FOR MORE FIGHTING AND NO POLITICAL SOLUTION IN SIGHT, THE EVER INCREASING DEPENDENCE OF THE GKR ON US AID, AND THE RELUCTANCE OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS TO VOTE THE LARGE SUMS NEEDED ALL CONTRIBUTE TO THE AIR OF DESPONDENCY WHICH HAS GRIPPED KHMER LEADERSHIP AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL. IT WILL NOT BE EASY TO TURN THIS AROUND. AFTER FIVE YEARS OF WAR, WORDS ALONE WILL NOT DO IT.

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